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2 Justice Officials Deny Remarks About Hoover

DES MOINES, Jan. 22 (UPI) —Two Justice Department officials say FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover is "a separate entity unto himself" who should have retired 10 years ago.

The statements were made Thursday before a group of Drake University law students by Robert Murphy, deputy chief of the department's civil rights division, and Mike Abell, chief of the division of firearms and explosives.

In Washington, a Justice Department spokesman said Abel and Murphy have discussed the story carried by United Press International with Attorney General John N. Mitchell's office and denied making the quoted remarks.

"The quotes are not accurate. They certainly do not reflect the views of the department. All three Department of Justice representatives have been directed to submit reports to the Attorney General regarding this matter," the department said in a formal statement.

Murphy was quoted as saying Hoover, 76, probably should have retired "10 years ago" and Abell was said to have agreed. Murphy said he thought Hoover would remain as FBI director until the bureau's new headquarters building in Washington is completed.

"They'll probably name it the Hoover Building," Murphy said, "and he could fittingly retire then."

Abell was sharply critical of Hoover's actions concerning the alleged plot to kidnap presidential adviser Henry Kissinger. He said Hoover made a "premature" announcement of the plot.

"I think this severely damaged the investigation at that point and hurt trial chances," Abell said.

"The FBI is a separate entity unto itself, and Mr. Hoover is a separate entity unto himself," Abell said.

A third Justice official—Wailliam Rehnquist, an assistant attorney general—went to bat for Hoover. Rhenquist, the only one of the three who is a political appointee, said Hoover had built the FBI into what it is today.